

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND BUSINESS REGULATION
**DEPARTMENT OF
TELECOMMUNICATIONS & ENERGY**

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July 27, 2004

Werner Schweiger
Senior Vice-President, Operations
NSTAR Electric
One NStar Way
Westwood, MA 02090

Re: Reported incident of July 20, 2004, Natick, Massachusetts

Dear Mr. Schweiger:

The Department of Telecommunications and Energy (the "Department") has received initial notification from Boston Edison Company, d/b/a/ NSTAR Electric ("NSTAR Electric" or the "Company") of an incident on July 20, 2004, involving an explosion at an NSTAR Electric manhole in the Town of Natick, Massachusetts. The Company's initial notification stated that personal injury resulted from the explosion. The Company also stated that it is conducting its own investigation of the incident.

The Department is conducting an assessment of this incident. As an initial matter, Department staff visited the site of the incident on July 21, 2004, viewed the manhole and spoke with Company personnel at the site. To assist the Department in our assessment of this incident, we require that NSTAR Electric submit to the Department written responses to the following questions by August 3, 2004.

1. Please provide a complete description of the incident and submit related documentation and/or information that the Company has collected concerning the likely cause of the incident.

2. Please describe the topography of the location and the surrounding infrastructure that may be relevant to the determination of the cause of the incident.
3. Please indicate the time of the incident, and the name and address of injured persons.
4. Please provide the date that the manhole cover in question was installed.
5. Please describe the manhole cover in detail including its size, weight and design characteristics. Please provide any documentation that the Company has related to the care and maintenance of the manhole cover and/or manholes where the particular cover is used.
6. Please describe any maintenance/repair performed in this particular manhole since January 1, 2000, including the date of the work, the nature of the work performed and the reason necessitating the work. Please provide documentation related to the maintenance/repair work of the manhole.
7. Please describe the facilities that are located inside the manhole and the purpose served by each facility. Please describe any other facilities known to the Company that are proximate to the manhole.
8. Please provide a one-line diagram showing the distribution service supply lines that are located in the manhole, including the associated stations served by the lines. Also identify the cable type, vintage of the cables, normal and emergency ratings of the cables, and the loading condition of the cable immediately prior to the incident.
9. Please calculate the short circuit current at the failed cable, and estimate the mechanical force resulting from this short circuit and its impact on the manhole cover. Please provide related documentation on how the Company performed its calculation and the information relied upon for any estimates.
10. Please indicate whether the distribution service supply lines located within this manhole have experienced any failure since January 1, 2000. If so, please explain the reason for each failure.
11. Please provide information on the equipment that failed inside the manhole as part of the current incident.
12. Please describe any associated or "sympathetic" outages that occurred coincident with this event.

13. Please provide a list of all manhole explosions that occurred since January 1, 2000 within the entire NSTAR Electric system (Boston Edison Company, Cambridge Electric Light Company, and Commonwealth Electric Company). As part of this list, include the date of the incident, a description of any injury that occurred, and the root cause of each incident.

14. Please indicate whether the Company has tested and found the existence of some form of gas: (a) within the manhole where the incident occurred; or (b) within any adjacent manhole.

15. Please describe NSTAR Electric's process for tracking and investigating manhole incidents.

To the extent this is an ongoing investigation, please update the Department on the status of your investigation as information becomes available. Copies of the Company's responses should be submitted to: (1) Mary L. Cottrell, Secretary; (2) Ronald F. LeComte, Director, Electric Power Division; (3) Ghebre Daniel, Engineer, Electric Power Division; and (4) John Cope-Flanagan, Esquire.

Should you have any questions concerning the information required by the Department, please contact me at 617-305-3658.

Sincerely,

Ronald F. LeComte
Director, Electric Power Division

cc: Commission

Mary L. Cottrell, Secretary
Timothy J. Shevlin, Jr., Executive Director
Andrew O. Kaplan, General Counsel
John Cope-Flanagan, Esquire
Ghebre Daniel, Electric Power Division